This report is based on data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), a nationally representative, longitudinal study of more than 23,000 ninth-graders in 2009. The cohort was surveyed again in spring 2012 when most students were in eleventh grade. This survey included questions about characteristics that would influence choosing a school or college after high school.

What factors do students rate as important when they are choosing a school or college to attend after high school?

The three factors with the highest percentages of "very important" ratings were academic quality/reputation (74 percent), having a desired program of study (74 percent), and job placement (73 percent) (Figure 1).

Two-thirds (67 percent) of students rated cost of attendance as a "very important" influence on their college choice (Figure 1).

Being far from home (12 percent) and family legacy status (9 percent) had the lowest percentages of "very important" ratings (Figure 1).

Data in this report are from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), a nationally representative sample survey. To learn more, visit http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/hsls09/. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019119.
Factors That Influence Student College Choice

How do self-reported ratings of the importance of cost of attendance vary by socioeconomic status (SES)?

Recent research has shown that many high school students overestimate or understate the costs of public colleges in their state, which may affect their college choices.¹

- Regardless of SES, over 95 percent of respondents rated the cost of attendance to be a “somewhat important” or “very important” factor in their choice of college (Figure 2).

- Similar percentages of students in the lowest SES quintile (73 percent) and middle three SES quintiles (70 percent) reported that cost of attendance was a "very important" influence on their college choice. By comparison, 56 percent of students in the highest SES quintile rated cost as a "very important" factor (Figure 2).

References